

Options Report for General Assembly

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 71-2-105(a)(12), the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability is to provide annually an “updated report and analysis of the waiting list for the state options program” to the Tennessee General Assembly.

For the members’ benefit, the report and analysis is laid out as follows:

- (1) A description of the OPTIONS program,
- (2) The current funding level for the program,
- (3) The actual number of people on the waiting list for the program, and
- (4) An analysis of the waiting list.

Options Program Description

The OPTIONS for Community Living program was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1999 in order to serve older individuals and adults with disabilities who do not qualify for long-term care services under Medicaid-long term care services. OPTIONS is a state-funded program. The funding can be used for personal care, homemaker services, and home-delivered meals or to offer transportation services. The average annual cost of OPTIONS is approximately \$3,200 per individual. As of November 2020, there are 2,216 individuals enrolled in the OPTIONS program.

Due to COVID-19, a number of individuals throughout the period of the pandemic placed their traditional services on hold due to concerns related to the spread of the virus. Additional services were provided to ensure the needs of individuals in the program were met such as purchase and or delivery of groceries and household supplies and medical equipment and supplies.

TennCare allowed for temporary COVID-related payment flexibilities for home and community-based services. In order to equalize TCAD rates with TennCare, TCAD allowed for the Area Agencies to increase rates for homemaker and personal care by ten (10) percent for two (2) months.

The Current Funding Level

In FY 2021, TCAD received \$9,590,800 in state appropriations for the OPTIONS program.

Waiting List

As of the end of November 2020, the waiting list numbers for OPTIONS as defined by the nine Area Agencies is as follows:

AAAD Name	# of Individuals on Waiting List at End of November 2020 for Category A & B

First TN	882
East TN	385
Southeast TN	152
Upper Cumberland	207
Greater Nashville Regional Council	289
South Central	201
Northwest TN	221
Southwest TN	42
Aging Commission of the Mid-South	187
Total	2,566

Analysis of the Waiting List

Individuals' access OPTIONS services by contacting their local AAAD through their Information and Assistance line (1-866-836-6678). Any individual that requests in-home services is screened on the telephone using an Intake Screening. The Intake Screening collects information that identifies risk factors or conditions that indicate the need for long-term supports and services. Screened individuals who have a total score of three (3) Activity of Daily Living (ADL)/Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL) limitations or a total score of two (2) ADL/IADL limitations with documented cognitive impairment who request in-home services may be placed on the OPTIONS waiting list. (Those individuals that qualify for Medicaid are referred to the TennCare program.) These guidelines are consistent with the minimum requirements to receive services.

Individuals are placed on the waiting list based on a Screening Prioritization score placing individuals with the highest score at the top of the waiting list. The Screening Prioritization score considers their ADL/IADL score, the amount of informal/formal support they have, overall health, and income level. No individual is denied services due to income; there is, however, a sliding scale in place for those individuals that have a little more income. Individuals that the AAAD can expect to serve within the next 18 months are placed on the Category A waiting list allowing AAADs to maintain contact with these individuals. TCAD staff in conjunction with AAAD staff work to determine the number of individuals that can be served in Category A based on trends and data analysis. Those individuals who are not expected to be served within the next 18 months are placed in Category B and contact is maintained; however, on a less frequent basis. The number of individuals needing access to OPTIONS services continues to grow; however, the funding to provide OPTIONS services are limited.

Enrollment in the OPTIONS program is driven by the amount of available funding. When there is an opening available, individuals are pulled from the waiting list based on their Screening Prioritization Score. Individuals with the highest risk are pulled off first. An in-home assessment is then completed which gathers information about health and nutritional status, financial status,

functional limitations, home environment, and social support system. The Options Counselor along with the individual and family, if available, develop a plan to deliver in-home services.

Individuals come off the waiting list for various reasons, including the following: they get enrolled into the OPTIONS program, they become eligible for another program, or their condition gets to the point where they enter long term care facilities (such as a nursing home).

Summary

There continues to be unmet needs in the OPTIONS program. There are currently 2,566 individuals waiting for services. With the average annual cost of services being \$3,200 per individual, it would cost \$8,211,200 to provide services to these individuals. TCAD, in partnership with the AAADs, will continue to try and increase the number of individuals that can be served under the OPTIONS program using best practices to maximize the resources that we receive for the program.

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